

State Champs Defend Title, Advance in NCS Playoffs

By Kevin D. Shallat



Photo Gavin Schlissel

The defending women's state volleyball champion Campolindo Cougars hosted the Miramonte Matadors for the second time in less than a week. The two teams would match up again on Wednesday, Nov. 13, for the third time this year in an early North Coast Section matchup. Campolindo mounted an incredible comeback after being down two games to one, to win this match 3-2.

The first game went back and forth, with no team leaping too far ahead. The Cougars kept a three point cushion for most of the game. Campolindo outside hitter and middle blocker Alex Shurtz had a huge block around the net to take make it 18-15, causing Miramonte to call a timeout. Outside hitter Kate Canty served well for the Cougars – a big reason they won the first game 25-17.

With the home crowd at a deafening roar, and Campolindo winning the battle by the net, it was apparent that Miramonte would have to get aggressive

in a hurry. The Matadors came out in the second game swinging, and jumped out to a 10-3 lead. With the help of a few Kari Johnson spikes, the Matadors were right back in the match.

Miramonte star outside hitter Juliana Stivanicevic came alive with a statement spike to take the score to 11-3. However the Cougars would not go down without a fight. Great players don't panic, and when challenged, they often answer right back. After Stivanicevic's spike, freshman setter Mary Vaccaro would set up Canty for a thunderous statement spike of her own that left the gym buzzing, taking the score to 11-4, and beginning one of the best comebacks of the season, as Vaccaro and her teammates would tie the score at 20-20.

The Mats earned the win in this game, beating the Cougars 27-25, but the comeback was a statement by the Cougars that did not go unheard. Campolindo head coach Scott Bishop mentioned how his assistant was kidding him that they should have gotten blown out in this game to save energy. Bishop said, "It was actually worth it not to do that, because we got a lot of momentum and we got our focus back a little bit, and got a little more confident."

Miramonte rode the high of winning the second game into the third game, playing with a determined mindset. Matador setter Mary Diamantidis once again got her teammates involved to scrap out a close win, beating the Cougars 25-23. However, Vaccaro and the rest of her teammates did not panic.

Campolindo outside hitter and middle blocker Chandler Moore played with a passion and inspired her team to a 25-23 win over Miramonte in the fourth game. In the short fifth and final game, the Cougars got out to a quick lead thanks to outside hitter and middle blocker Rachel Eberhard, as she came up with big plays around the net to win this game 15-5, and take this NCS match 3-2.



Campolindos Alessandra Neason (12) and Kim Condie (15)

Photo Gavin Schlissel

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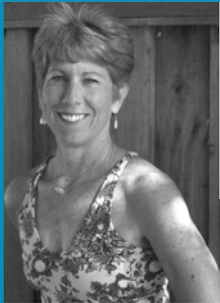
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